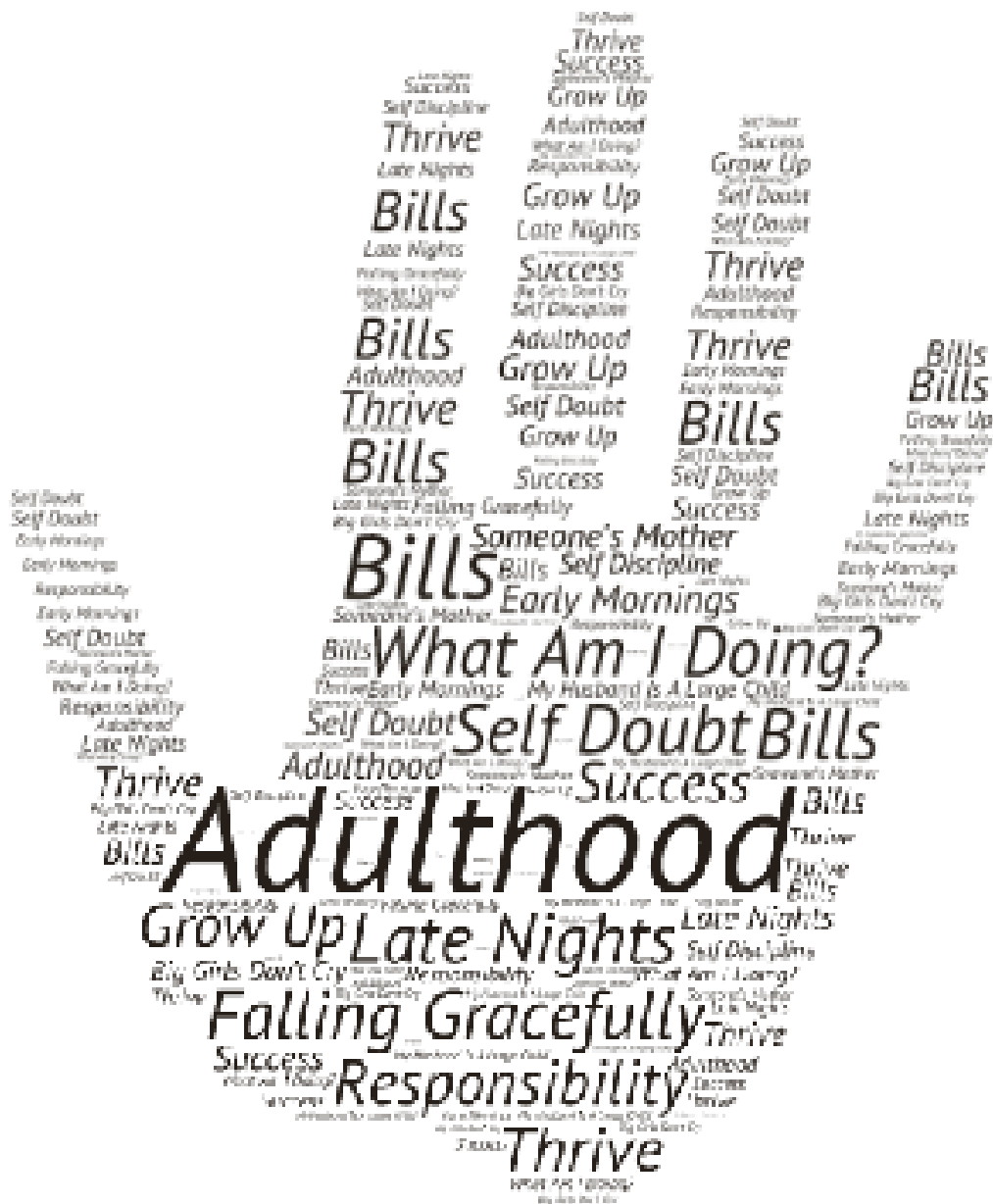
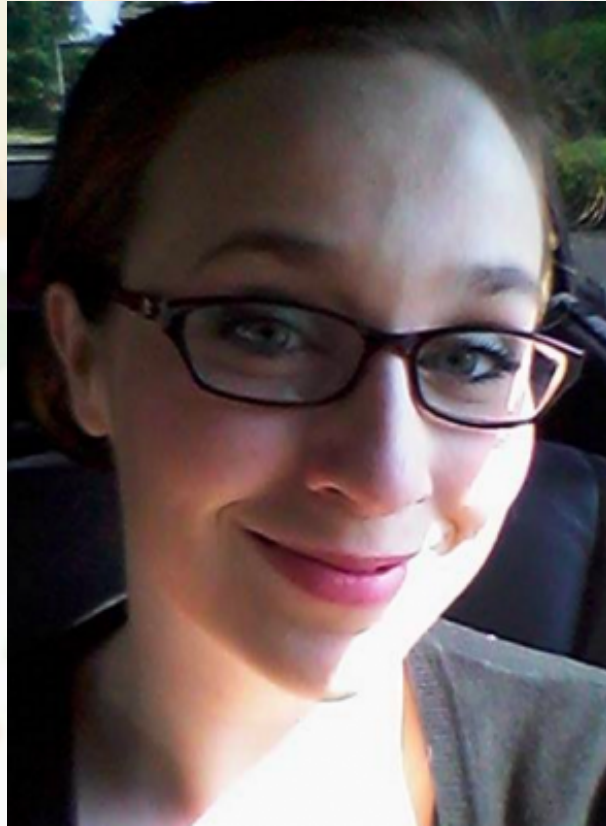


Stumbling into Adulthood

A True Story by Katie Burnette



Stumbling into Adulthood



Written by Katie Burnette in February of 2016

Prologue

"It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are." - E. E. Cummings

The past eight years have been a journey into adulthood for me. It was a journey I was not prepared to voyage. At eighteen, I grudgingly signed my name on the lease of my first apartment. I had just graduated high school two weeks previous, and my mother, with the ink on her divorce papers still wet, decided it was an opportune time to leave me for California. I was an adult now, but nothing had changed. I was still an eighteen-year-old girl, over a hundred miles away from either parent. I stumbled over bills, jobs, schools, disappointment, love, and an unexpected pregnancy. I stand here today at twenty-six, still unsteady.

However, I have the ultimate motivation now. His name is Sam. He came into this world weighing 7lbs 8 oz, but his impact on my life has been and continues to be tremendous. He is the reason I decided to continue my education with Tennessee Tech University and the reason I'm writing this book for my literacy class. This book gives insight to my continuing transition into adulthood. I am Katie Burnette, and I am trying to be an adult.

Stumbling into Adulthood

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My early childhood was spent traveling between my two homes, Oak Ridge, Tn, and Tuscumbia, Al. My family was anything but "normal". My parents combined boast an impressive 9 marriages and seven children, me being the only girl. I wanted to be a teacher my entire life, but my parents were worried that it was the wrong choice financially. I explored six college majors before I knew that teaching was my true path. I've taken a long, windy path to get where I am, but I've grown and learned lessons on that treacherous path that are invaluable to who I am today. I hope this book gives readers an understanding of who I am and how I hope to improve myself as well.

Acknowledgment

I want to give credit to my parents. They did a wonderful job raising me and my siblings even through all the challenges they faced. They have shown me what it means to survive. Thank you to my older brothers for being so protective of me. I am sure you all saved me from some awkward high school memories. Thank you to my husband who deals with me on a daily basis and tells me I'm beautiful. Most acknowledgement and thanks to my small son, who doesn't realize it now, but he's made my heart bigger, my home fuller, and my perserverance stronger.

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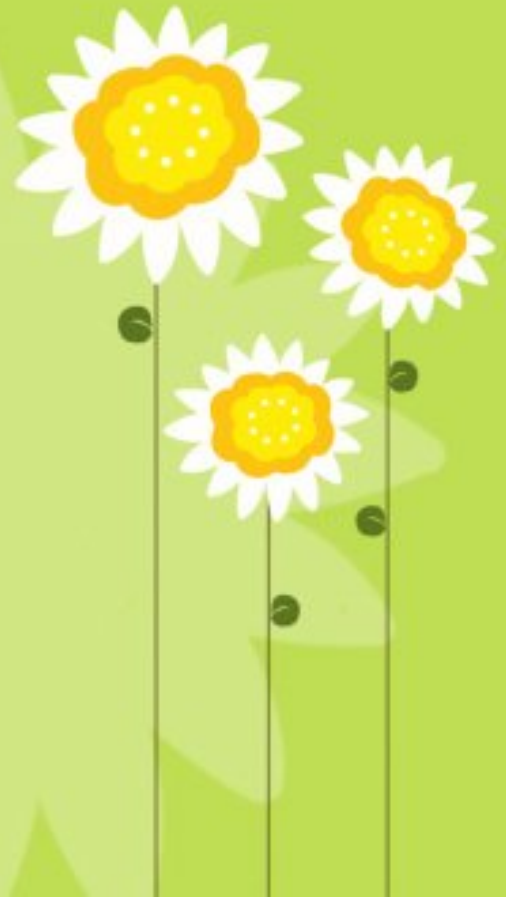
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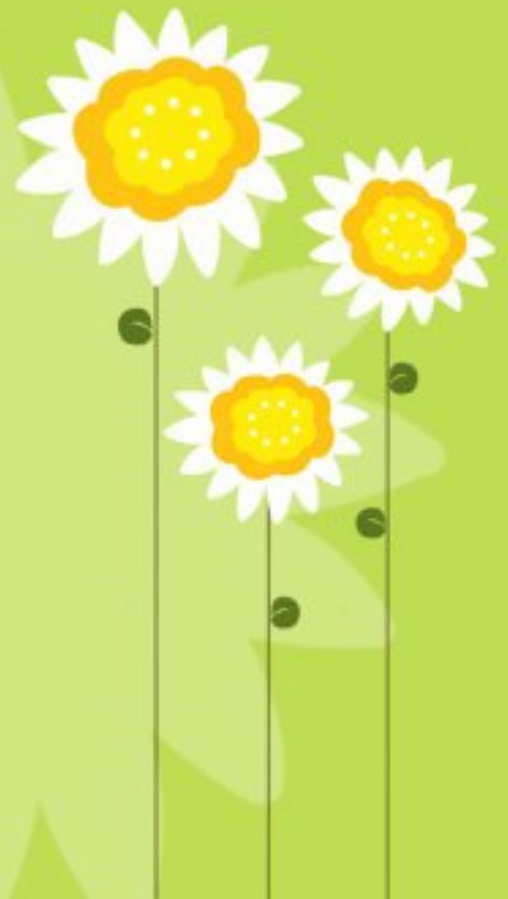
A Day in the Life of Katie:

She wakes up at 6:00 A.M., rolls out of bed softly so as not to disturb her sleeping son. She kisses her husband as he leaves in the dark of early morning. A million thoughts in her head: What do I need to pack for lunch? Does Sam have enough diapers? I need to feed the cat. Did I charge my computer last night? Sometimes, it's hard for her to know where to start. She gets herself ready, wishing she had time to take a shower, and then wakes her sleepy son, who is always hopeful that mommy will be staying home today.

Her son protests breakfast and clothes, but she gets him fed and clothed anyway. Thirty- minutes later, she will be walking into her Literacy class. She will sit in class for four hours, then immediately drive to work, and clock-in for another four. She will listen to her son cry for her in the next room on and off throughout her shift. She feels a knot of guilt in her stomach for not being able to comfort him. She clocks out and takes her son home at 6 o'clock.



When she arrives home, her husband is starving, covered in black from his blue-collar work. She cooks and cleans and gets her son ready for bed. At 10 o'clock, her home is peaceful, which she likes, because she'll spend the next hour or so studying and doing schoolwork. She'll lay down with her baby at midnight, knowing already how tired she'll be in the morning. "It will all be worth it in the end," she tells herself as she falls into a quick sleep.



Remembrance of things present:

As you already know, twenty years passes more quickly then you think. When you're forty-six, I want you to still remember the good things happening to you right now. Please continue to take lots of videos and pictures of Sam. I want you to remember his sweet voice, especially when he says "Mama", and his contagious laugh. Remember that you struggled to get where you're at now, hopefully as a successful teacher. Remember how passionate you are about children and learning. Don't forget about how hard your husband worked so that you could get your degree, return the favor, if you haven't already, and let him chase his dreams. If Daddy is still alive, I pray he is, hug him today and tell him how much you love him. Remember how he always encouraged you and took your side, even when you didn't deserve it. That goes for Mom too, remember that no matter how bad your fights with her are, she is the only mother you have. Call her right now, and tell her that you do love her. Remember how great it feels to be young and in love. Don't forget how far you and your husband have come, how you defied all your obstacles to have the strong relationship you have now. Don't forget to love yourself and stay true to who you are, no matter how alienated others try to make you feel.

Bucket List

- Make a complete fool out of yourself.** Even when I don't realize it, I'm worrying about other peoples' opinions of my actions or myself. Before I die, I want to remedy this. I want to completely embarrass myself and have a great time doing it.
- Learn how to drive a stick shift.** My husband is dying to teach me how to drive a 5-speed, something that he loves to do. It's not really about wanting to drive a stick shift. It's about letting my husband teach me.
- Take a trip to Disney World.** It may seem cliché, but I've never been, my husband has never been, and my son has never been. It's a place a person has to see at least once in a lifetime if they get the opportunity.
- Adopt a child.** I feel a calling to adopt a child. It really affects me to know that there are unwanted and mistreated children all over this world. I cannot imagine the pain those children must carry around with them. If I can give just one of those children a mother, I'd be overjoyed.
- Let my dad walk me down the aisle.** My husband and I had a quick courthouse marriage. It was sweet and intimate. My husband even cried, but it was missing a moment I'd dreamed about my entire life, the moment that my dad would walk me down the aisle. I plan to have a wedding ceremony in the future, so my father can walk me down, and I can wear a real wedding dress.

Always Say Never

I've had many new experiences throughout my life. Some experiences have been by choice, others by fate. Many of which I hope to never have to do again. Here's a list of just a few.

I will always say never too:

- ◆ CSPAN
- ◆ Calamari
- ◆ Following my GPS into the ghetto
- ◆ Rats
- ◆ Reptiles
- ◆ Soccer
- ◆ Vaping
- ◆ Airplanes
- ◆ Sushi
- ◆ Acid wash jeans
- ◆ Perms
- ◆ Anatomy text books
- ◆ Mountain Dew
- ◆ Wearing the color yellow
- ◆ Discussing politics with my grandmother
- ◆ Writing a check for my groceries
- ◆ Turkey Creek on Black Friday
- ◆ Modern Art
- ◆ Holding a stranger's spot in line
- ◆ Cars that look like trucks and vice versa



Likes

Autumn

Dollywood

Childhood memories

Snow days

Butterflies

Chocolate

Daydreaming

Anyone who shares my sense of humor

Children

Genuine people

Rainbows

Falling in love

Dislikes

Black licorice

Scary movies

Rude people

Halitosis

Broken hairbands

Uncomfortable seats

90 degree + weather

Beard hair in the sink

Road rage

Fake smiles

Fake friends

Heartbreak



**~The Perfect Present~
Give me the ability to forgive.**

I carry with me everyday the negative impact that others have left me with, the disappointment, hurt, and bad memories. I need the ability to forgive because I know that holding onto anger and negativity only affects my life. These people will never ask for my forgiveness; they don't even believe they've done anything wrong. Some may recognize their wrongdoing but are too prideful to admit it. I want to confront these people. Sometimes I do confront them, in my head. I have full speeches rehearsed and ready to go. I will never give my speeches. I will never cause the confrontation because that will only fuel the negativity. I need the ability to forgive so that I can focus on all the positivity in my life and relinquish the control of my angry grudges. I need to strive to be like Christ.

The Ultimate Excuse:

You see, I had every intention of being in class today, but fate had other plans. First of all, I woke up an hour late. It seems that a burglar broke into my house, turned off the alarm on my cell phone, and left! Some criminals have the cruelest sense of humor. I leaped out of my bed with the upmost speed, immediately searching for my car keys. I searched everywhere, even the in the freezer! It was then that I realized my son was jingling as he ran down the hallway. It appears that he though it would be a good idea to put my keys in his diaper for safekeeping. I reached into the diaper to retrieve my keys, but my keys were not the only thing in his diaper. I sprinted into the bathroom.

Frazzled, I threw the keys into the bathtub and turned the shower on full blast. It cleaned them wonderfully, except that the high-pressure water forced my keys right down the drain. I had no choice but to phone a plumber. The plumber showed up immediately, what luck! As he snaked my keys from the drain, a small, strangle, exotic bug crawled out too. “It can’t be!” exclaimed the plumber, “Why, it’s a endangered Bathtubian Bubble Beetle!” I stared at him perplexed, “That’s great and all, but I must be going now.” “No, no, no! I have to call the Endangered Species of America Association right now. Your bathroom must be sectioned off and declared a protected natural habitat for the Bathtubian Bubble Beetle!”

So you see, I had to stay. The ESAA arrived within seconds, what luck again. They knocked down a whole wall to conceal my bathroom; my cat was tragically killed during construction, how ironic? I was finally ready to leave for your class when I realized that class was already over. So, I’m sure you’ll agree with me that this bizarre morning was completely out of my control, and I’m sure you’ll want to give me a pass this time, right?

My own list of lists

Things that have moved me...

- The birth of my son**
- Watching church members accept Christ**
- Jesus Christ's crucifixion**
- Marrying my husband**
- Having a little girl with no mother call me mommy**
- My cousin's struggle with Spina Bifida**
- My brother's deployment in Afganistan**
- Joseph Dillman's battle with brain cancer**
- September 11th Attacks**
- Shady Hook Elementary School Shootings**

What's in a name?

My name is Katherine Elizabeth. I don't feel my name is all that special, but it is mine. My ultrasounds showed that I was a boy. My parents were fully expecting their third son, when by complete surprise, I came out all girl. They had already decided to name me Peyton James, but didn't like Peyton for a girl, so they decided on the spot to name me Katherine Elizabeth, my mother's choice mostly. Katherine means "pure, clear", and Elizabeth means "oath of God". I felt I could never quite live up to my name, that's why I prefer Katie. It felt unique to me growing up. I didn't meet another Katie until I was in the seventh grade, and I've never met a Katie I didn't like.



My Personal Alphabet



A-Aggravating

B-Blunt

C-Caring

D-Delightful

E-Easy-going

F-Faithful

G-Genuine

H-Happy

I-Intuitive

J-Joyful

K-Kooky

L-Loving

M-Motherly

N-Nurturing

O-Open-minded

P-Panicky

Q-Quick-witted

R-Rowdy

S-Sarcastic

T-True

U-Unique

V-Vivacious

W-Wondrous

X-Xenophobic

Y-Young

Z-Zestful

I usually struggle describing myself for assignments like this one. I can be serious and strict or silly and immature. I am brave at times, while I panic in other situations. I can be sarcastic and aggravating, and then be loving and open-minded. I am unique, and I adapt to most situations.

Are You Hungry?

My all-time favorite meal is terriyaki hibachi chicken from Wasabi. I have always been fond of Asian cuisine, and when I discovered Wasabi in 2011, I knew nothing else could ever compare. They have it all, variety, entertainment, and edamame. From the ginger salad and miso soup at the beginning to the fried rice and terriyaki chicken at the end. The entire meal is a home-run in my opinion, and there's always enough left to enjoy the next day.

The Examined Life

Best Attributes

Understanding

Patient

Accepting

Funny

Determined

Genuine

Greatest Faults

Indecisive

Procrastinator

Stubborn

Argumentative

Forgetful

Messy

Lessons I Learned After It Was Too Late

I've made many mistakes in my life that in turn taught me pivotal life lessons. My biggest lesson I learned after it was too late was that my own thoughts should be the loudest. The reason I'm still pursuing a degree at 26 is because many people thought they were doing the right thing by urging me not to become a teacher. I knew in my heart that teaching was right for me, but I let others opinions outshine my own. Another life lesson I've learned the hard way is that you can pour all your effort, love, and time into a person and that person can not love you back. With my first love, I was convinced that if I just loved him more, he would love me back, but the truth hurt. He did not love me, and I lied to myself for a whole year before it ended on bad terms. I also regret the words I've spoken out of anger. No matter what I do, I cannot erase the hurt those words caused.



Favorite Songs

Cruise- Florida Georgia Line

For me, there's no better therapy then riding down a backgroud with the windows down blasting a feel-good son. Cruise is the ultimate therapy song for me. It always remedies my stress.

Ride- Somo

Somo has the most amazing voice. This song is another feel-good song. It makes you want to sing in your car and be in a good mood.

Cowboys and Angels- This was the first song me and my husband danced to the night we met, and it describes us fairly accurately. Everytime I hear it, it brings back those sweet memories.

Waterfalls- TLC

This was my favorite song when I was four-years-old. I still know every single word. Hearing this song makes me reminisce about my childhood and riding in the car with my Dad.

Landslide- Stevie Nicks

This song touched me the first time I heard it. The singer has a unique voice and the lyrics are symbolic and uplifting. This is definitely one of my favorites.

Who Am I?

- 1) Mother-** Before anything I am a mother. This is my most important, happiest, and rewarding role. If I could only be one role, I would pick this one.
- 2) Wife-** Until death to us part, I am my husband's wife. My marriage brings support, intimacy, and companionship to my life. I enjoy being a wife.
- 3) Sister-** I am the only sister to six brothers. I get asked for relationship advice on a regular basis. I feel like a therapist for my brothers and also a mediator between them and my parents. It's not easy, but I love my brothers.
- 4) Daughter-** I am a daddy's girl to the max. I am my Dad's only daughter, and my Dad has always adored me. My mother and I have always butted heads; perhaps we are too alike. Even though my Mom and I argue, we both know we love each other, and I am her shopping buddy.
- 5) Student-** Being a student is challenging, especially when I have so many roles to play in a single day, but being a student is important to me. Being a student now means that I'll be a teacher later. It's my ultimate personal goal right now.

In Other Words

The only way to have a friend is to be one. - Ralph Waldo Emerson

**I know I gave you life,
but really you gave me
mine.- Unknown**

**We fall in love by chance,
we stay in love by choice.-
Unknown**

The obstacle is the path.- Unknown

**Enjoy the little things.-
Unknown**

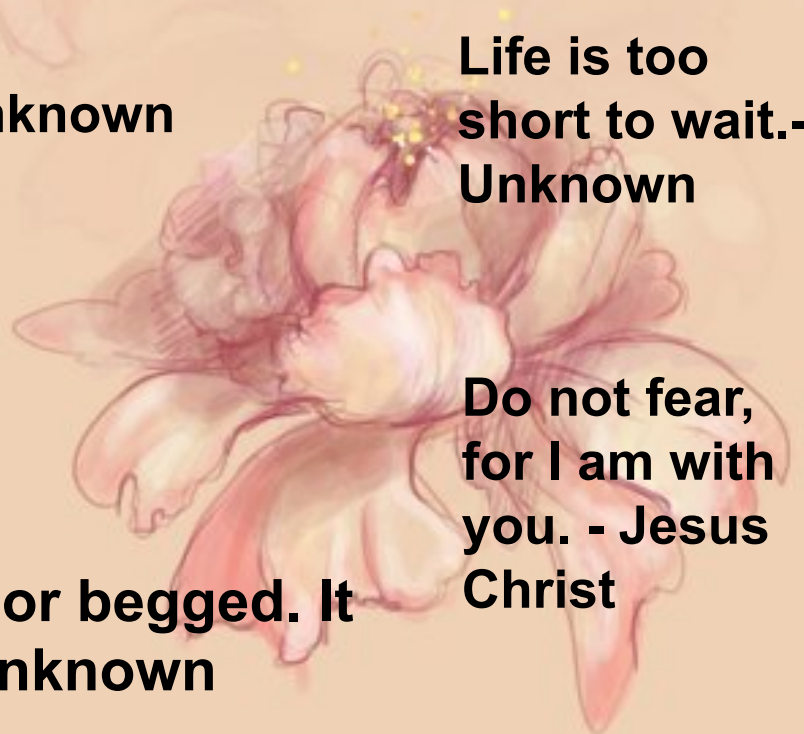
**Respect is not imposed nor begged. It
is earned and offered. - Unknown**

**Honesty is the highest
form of intimacy.-
Unknown**

**Feed your faith and your
doubts will starve to
death- Unknown**

**Life is too
short to wait.-
Unknown**

**Do not fear,
for I am with
you. - Jesus
Christ**



Epitaph

**"Sleep on now, and take your
rest. "**

Matthew 26:45

Katherine Elizabeth Burnette was a loving mother and wife who inspired those around her. She was an advocate for children and education. She stayed a positive and giving person, no matter how hard life tried to make her bitter. She will be remembered fondly by both staff and students at her school. She leaves behind her son, Samuel Burnette, whom she loved more than life itself, and her soul mate, Joseph Burnette. Katie wants her loved ones to not be saddened by her passing but to rejoice in her homecoming.



